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### LANGUAGE TINKERING.

DR. ESPERANTO'S *International Tongue*. Preface and complete method. Edited for Englishmen by J. ST. WARSAW. Ch. Kelter, 1888.

*Plea for an American Language*, or Germanic-English, showing the necessity of systematic spelling and of making our words pure, self-developing and self-explaining, according to Greek, German and Irish models, with a Grammar, Reader and Vocabulary of the proposed American Language, by ELIAS MOLEE, PH. B. Chicago, John Anderson & Co. 1888.

The first of the above works is another ludicrous instance of "English as She is Spoke;" and in toiling through the mass of sesquipedalian verbiage, one can hardly restrain one's risibles long enough to ferret out the ideas the author is laboring to convey. However, he begs the reader not "to take with mistrust that opusculum in hand," but "to treat seriously and critically the question he brings forth." I shall endeavor to treat him in this spirit. We must credit the Doctor with having foreseen some of the great difficulties which lay in his way. The principal ones, according to his opinion and in his own words, are:—

I. To render the study of the tongue so easy, as making it mere play for the studying.

II. To set the adept in the direct possibility of making use of his science with people of either nationality, no matter if the new tongue is agreed by the whole world, if it has many adepts or not—that is: the tongue is to be directly a mean of international intercourse.

III. To find out a way of conquering the natural indifference of men as disposing them on the quickest manner and "en masse" to learn and use the proposed tongue as being a living one and not only in last extremities and with a key in hand.

He then goes on to explain and illustrate how these difficulties have been met. A beautiful simplicity has certainly been secured. No one will question, as he says, that his "whole grammar can be completely learned out in one hour." Verbs have no personal inflexions. Their only change is the addition of suffixes to indicate mood and tense. Nouns

have two cases—the nominative in *o* and the accusative in *on*. All masculines become feminine by taking the infix *in*; e. g. *frato*, brother, *fratino*, sister. This makes it unnecessary to learn more than the masculine. Adjectives end in *a* for the nom. and *an* for the acc., as *bona*, *bonan*, good. The opposite of any adjective is made by prefixing *mal*; hence *malbon*, bad, *malfort*, weak. Adverbs are formed by adding *e* to the adjective, as *bone*, well.

As to the vocabulary, it is taken almost exclusively from the Romanic languages, the reason assigned therefor being that the Latin roots common to these are pretty generally found in most European languages.

As a specimen of DR. ESPERANTO'S "International Tongue" may be cited the Lord's Prayer. (Pronounce the consonants as in English; except *ç* = *ch*, *g* before *e* = *j*, *j* = *y*, *c* = *s*. The vowels, as in Italian.)

Patro nia, kiu estas en la ĉielo, sankta estu Via nomo, venu regeco Via, estu volo Via, kiel en la ĉielo, tiel ankaŭ sur la tero. Panon nian ĉiutagan donu al ni hodiaŭ kaj pardonu al ni ŝuldojn niajn kiel ni ankaŭ pardonas al niaj ŝuldantoj; ne konduku nin en tenton, sed liberigu nin de la malvera, ĉar Via estas la regado, la forta kaj la gloro eterne. Amen.

MR. MOLEE is a little less ambitious in the scope of his proposal. As his title-page shows he aims primarily to give us a language that shall be strictly national, at least for a time. Believing in the eventual world-supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race, he thinks we could help on the good work by removing from our language certain difficulties which are great impediments to its acquisition by foreigners, as well as by our own people. It is easy, of course, to make out a strong case against English in some regards. It has frequently been pointed out that the language has lost much in simplicity and ease of comprehension by failing to compound its own roots, instead of going to the Latin and Greek, in making new words; and, secondly, our illogical spelling has long been felt to be one of the most unfortunate drawbacks educators have to contend with. These two themes form a large part of the burden of MR. MOLEE'S little book, and we must do him the justice of saying he has many

wise and good things to note on these subjects. He thinks much would be gained for popular education, if we not only stopt borrowing from other languages whenever we have a new idea to express, but also translated most of our foreign terms into others made from the common, well-known words of every-day life. Accordingly, *ichthyology*, *ornithology*, *astronomy* would become *fishlore*, *birdlore*, *starlore*.

On the subject of spelling-reform he has nothing new to offer. He can do little more than emphasize the evils of the present system and recommend a change which shall be purely phonetic.—Aside from these two features, which are discussed at much length, he feels that a more radical change in the language is desirable and advisable. Considering the composite character of our people and the improbability of their ever being welded into national homogeneity so long as three or four languages are fostered by large numbers of them, he is of opinion that it would be the part of wisdom for us to construct a national language out of, say, English, German and Scandinavian, which should, as far as possible, be based on the words and grammatical principles common to them all. Such a language, as it could excite no prejudices in the hearts of any of the three nationalities represented, could be cultivated, cherished and loved by them all, and would possess many advantages over our present diversity of speech. He thinks this is a duty we owe to ourselves in pure self-defense; otherwise we shall be left behind in the world's progress, or, worse still, be subject to the silent conquest of other branches of the Germanic race.

Without meaning to commit myself to the author's views, which are urged with no little cogency and ingenuity, I may say that there is certainly a question raised here of some importance, and it behooves us to consider whether any such dangers threaten us, and, if so, what remedy we shall apply.

Limited space forbids me to enter into a discussion of this subject. Those who feel an interest in it should read for themselves MR. MOLEE's book, which is the fruit of thirty years' hard study. However much we differ with him, we must respect the honesty of his convictions and the unselfishness of his aims.

SAMUEL GARNER.

Annapolis, Md.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THOMAS'S EDITION OF GOETHE'S "TASSO."

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—Will you kindly allow me a few words of comment upon the points made in the short critique of my edition of GOETHE'S "Tasso," published in the last number of the NOTES. I write, of course, solely in the interest of scholarship, since, if personal feeling were concerned, your verdict that my work is "from this point of view the best edition of a German classic issued in this country," is not a verdict that a reasonable editor ought to complain of, unless that it be too complimentary.

1. You observe that "the words *Einklang der Natur* contain much more than a mere allusion to the ancient doctrine of the music of the spheres, as the whole passage further on discloses." Most true, certainly; but who says or implies that they do not? Read the rest of the note.

2. You wish that I had quoted some of the "good German writers" who use "er fühlt sich *einen* Mann" instead of the "correct" locution "er fühlt sich *ein* Mann." If that is meant to hint a doubt of my accuracy, see Sanders 'Wörterbuch,' I. 550, column 3, where there are half a dozen of the desired specimens quoted from TIECK, GRABBE, GUTZKOW, RÜCKERT, etc. I will not take space to transcribe them here. I admit that the further statement "the accusative is the common construction" ought to have been qualified, or entirely omitted. But you say nothing about that.

3. You say it is "evidently by a slip of the pen" that I speak of "(the) fulsome adulation in the tone of a sixteenth century court-poet;" and add that it is "evidently the *Dichterlinge* of the seventeenth century" that I mean. Permit me to assure you that my pen did not slip and that I say exactly what I mean. I am talking of TASSO and his contemporaries. The question is whether the extravagant language of GOETHE'S "Tasso" in the text is a part of GOETHE'S Ferrarese local color, or grows out of his general conception of the character. Some of the German commentators take the former view, I take the latter.

4. My appendix on the text is condemned as